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THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN TENNESSEE REORGANIZED.

TO THE
REPUBLICANS OF TENNESSEE
AND THE
UNITED STATES.

**Memorial, Resolutions and Proceedings had at a Convention held at
the Capitol,**

NASHVILLE, FEBRUARY 16TH, 1870,

TOGETHER WITH THE SPEECHES OF

HONS. A. J. FLETCHER AND J. O. SHACKELFORD.

The Finance Committee, to whom was assigned the task of preparing for publication the proceedings of the Convention, take pleasure in placing before the Republicans of the country the following record of business transacted, which they hope will do much to give confidence, insure active co-operation and place the Republican army of Tennessee in condition to make a bold and successful resistance to the rapid and unblushing efforts of a rebel Democracy to strike down all that remains to protect those who loved and dared help maintain the Union when it was in danger. We ask the Union men of Tennessee to read this paper, circulate it and prepare to organize in every county to defeat the nefarious schemes of a horde of States Rights Democrats. Let us prepare to protect the lives and property of all our fellow-citizens without regard to condition, race or color.

"Let us have peace."

THE COMMITTEE.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONVENTION.

On Wednesday, Feb. 16, a Convention of Delegates from all parts of the State, assembled at the Capitol to organize and perfect a plan to put the Republicans of this State in condition to make some resistance to the overwhelming tide of modern Rebel Democracy that is subverting all that is left of Republicanism in the Constitution and laws of the State.

At twelve o'clock the Hall of the House of Representatives was filled with eager expectant Republicans; Hon. A. J. Fletcher called the meeting to order and nominated Hon. D. A. Nunn as permanent Chairman, which was unanimously carried. Secretaries were appointed and the Con-

vention proceeded to business.

On motion the following were appointed a Committee on Resolutions: A. J. Fletcher, J. H. Agee, A. Smith and J. M. Tommeny.

While the committee were preparing their resolutions, the Hon. H. H. Harrison was called upon for remarks, who responded in a speech full of patriotic, hopeful sentiments.

The Committee upon Resolutions reported the following:

Resolved, That we indorse and approve of the platform of principles adopted by the Republican National Convention at Chicago in May, 1868, and that we deem a further declaration of principles unnecessary at the present time.

Resolved, That we hereby earnestly invite all persons in the State, well disposed to the National Government, irrespective of former party affiliations, to unite with us in rescuing the State from the domination of a corrupt, proscriptive and oppressive Democratic party.

Resolved, That notwithstanding our isolated and oppressed condition, we have an abiding confidence that the General Government will extend to us that protection which is due to true and tried allegiance and which we so greatly need.

Resolved, That we approve of the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments to the Constitution of the United States, and that the safety of the loyal people of Tennessee urgently demands the enforcement of said fourteenth amendment by appropriate and speedy legislation by Congress.

Resolved, That we regard the so-called Constitutional Convention, now in session in this city, as irregular and revo-

lutionary, and that we disapprove and condemn its entire proceedings; especially their proposition to strike down the present judiciary of the State, and to annex a condition to the right of the poor man to vote.

Resolved, That we approve of the course of the Republican members of the present Legislature; while we regard much of the action of the majority of said body as partisan and oppressive in the extreme, and we denounce as violative of the right of free speech and freedom of the press the proceedings now going on against those who signed the call for this meeting.

which were unanimously carried.

D. W. Peabody, of Davidson, moved that a State Central Committee of sixteen, two from each Congressional District, be appointed by the Chairman, and that he report the names at the mass meeting to be held at the Court House to-night. Carried.

Col. Beaumont moved that a Committee of five be appointed to collect facts of outrages upon Republicans in the State, and that they report to the State Central Committee. Carried.

The Chairman named the following gentlemen as that Committee: A. J. Fletcher, T. A. Kerchival, T. R. Tannett, S. B. Beaumont and A. A. Carter.

The Chair announced that a business meeting of delegates would be held at the Stacey House at 3 o'clock P. M.

The Convention having completed

its business, adjourned to meet in the Court House at 7½ P. M.

AT THE COURT HOUSE.

A large concourse of Republicans assembled at the Court House in the evening, and after organization the members of the State Central Committee were announced as follows:

STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

1st District—A. H. Pettibone, A. W. Howard.

2d District—M. L. McConnell, John C. Tate.

3d District—Thos. Waters, R. S. Kendrick.

4th District—W. H. Wisener, W. T. Elliott.

5th District—Jno. Trimble, Jno. J. Carey, Nashville.

6th District—G. W. Blackburn, Fielding Hurst.

7th District—W. W. Murray, A. E. Boone.

8th District—J. L. Poston, W. T. Kennedy,

Who will meet at Nashville Thursday, February 24th, for organization and business.

The following memorial and resolution from the colored men were read and adopted:

TO THE PRESIDENT:

We, the loyal people of this State, in mass meeting assembled, to take in consideration the outrages committed upon us, and to devise some means to relieve, as far as possible, the loyal people from their unfortunate position, by being the prey of a well organized band of out-

laws, prowling about the State, committing depredations that would set to blush the darkest ages of the world; crimes the most heinous committed under the cover of night, and by day, with impunity. We have suffered long, and lost many of our best men both white and colored, and notwithstanding that, we had hoped that the time had come when we would not have to make an appeal to you, for the protection of our lives and property; but to our discomfort and the displeasure of every good citizen living in our State, crime is largely on the increase of the nature described above. We have appealed in vain to the authorities of our State, and in every instance it has only proved more injurious to our people, so much so that it is with great difficulty that the colored people can be induced to give information of their true condition. Having thus exhausted every means known to us legally, to seek redress or check the outrages perpetrated upon the colored people, as a last resort, and the highest known to our country, we now appeal to you, sir, to give us some relief. We find that since the authorities of our State are indifferent to our appeals, either from an intimacy with many of these outlaws, or from fear of their powerful organization, to even make an attempt to ferret out the guilty, and bring to justice and pun-

ish those that should be the last to escape, sir! we appeal to you, in the name of justice, in the name of the hard working men of our State, in the name of our wives and children, and in the name of our country and her honor, to send us some relief. We have invited the envy of these people by our devotion to this Government, and can it be possible that our Government intends to give us over again to the tender mercies of these people. The war in open combat where soldiers decided the disputes of their country, has ceased, they have merely returned from the field to the farms and cities, in ten thousand forms upon the labor and loyal people of the State, seeking revenge for past defeat; we therefore, pray that you will, by special message to the Congress of the United States, make known our

condition here, or by some means best suited to your judgment, send us some relief. The people are being taken from their beds at night or from prisons and hanged or shot down like beasts, and it would seem as though they were taken and put in prison for the convenience of these lawless bands.

Hear this, our first appeal, and we hope it may be the last of its kind, is the prayer of the ill-used and loyal people of our State, and we will ever pray for you and our country.

Resolved, That this memorial be sent to our Representatives in Congress with the request that they be presented to the President of the United States.

After which speeches were made by the Hon. A. J. Fletcher and Hon. J. O. Shackelford.

SPEECH OF HON. A. J. FLETCHER'

At an adjourned meeting, at the Court House, at night, the Hon. A. J. Fletcher addressed the assembly.

He said: That his relation to the present meeting was certainly interesting. In the first place, any speaker, addressing a Republican audience in Tennessee, at this crisis, speaks, as it were, with a halter around his neck, and with a consciousness, that the muzzle of a pistol may be at his brain in a few hours. But he, (the speaker) incurred the additional hazard of impeachment, censure and arrest by the Legislature and the so-called Constitutional Convention, now in session. As Secretary of State of Tennessee, these bodies had him completely in their power. They might depose him, they might impeach him, they might censure him, and they might libel him on their journals, as he believed they would, and he had

no redress. The Kuklux or Pale Faces, might hang him as they had Barmore, or shoot him as they had Senator Case and a thousand others, but the Constitution of Tennessee guaranteed to him the freedom of speech, and of the press and the right to speak his mind on political questions, and he proposed to do so, so long as that Constitution was in force, and so long as we had the form of free government. Be the consequence to myself what they may (said the speaker) whether it be deposition, impeachment, censure, or the halter, I intend to arraign the present Legislature and Convention and the party in power in Tennessee for usurpation, disloyalty and oppression. The loss of an office or even of one life was a small matter in comparison with the great rights now endangered and, it may be, lost.

What, sirs, have we witnessed in this city in the last few days? Half a dozen gentleman meet by accident. They are Republicans. They talk over the condition of things in the State. They know that the words and actions of Republicans are daily misrepresented and tortured by the press. They see a vast secret organization first known as "Kuklux" and then "Pale Faces," nightly riding over the country in masks and shrouds, butchering, in cold blood, at the hour of midnight, the unoffending citizens, and such acts either suppressed or grossly misrepresented and directly or indirectly justified. They see a Legislature in session repealing every law on the statute book that may afford any protection to the loyal citizens, and enacting just such laws as they can or dare enact for their oppression. They see a Convention, calling itself a Constitutional Convention, assembled without authority of law, laying its hands upon the most sacred rights guaranteed to the citizen. They see, in short, that the government of law has ceased and that brute force, armed and masked, governs the State. One gentleman, an old and honored native of the State, suggests that a newspaper ought to be started with the courage to lay these things before the country, and another suggests the importance of organizing the Republicans of this State into a party on great national principles, and they separate with an agreement to see other friends and invite them to unite in an effort to effect these results. Finally they agree to send out a circular letter, calling attention to these facts and these necessities, and inviting Republicans to meet at the Capital of the State to confer together on the subject of their common welfare. The circular letter was written and signed by eighteen citizens, printed and sent by mail to prominent Republican in different parts of the State. It is written, it is true, in plain and direct language, but no stronger than was usual with the Whigs and Democrats in similar proceedings in former days. It states, in brief, that the crisis is alarming, that violence prevails in many parts of the State, and that the acts of the Legislature and Convention are oppressive. Its design was to call an ordinary political meeting for ordinary and practical purposes, but it is true at an extraordinary crisis. No sooner was the circular made public than the attention of the Legislature was called to it. Not, it is true, by a member of any experience or weight of character, but, as might be expected, by the busiest, most meddlesome and most officious of them all. Yet, sirs, proceedings were commenced in the Legislature against those who proposed to call the meeting and was voted for by the party in power almost unanimously. A committee with

power to send for persons and papers was raised and it was declared in the debate and in the newspapers that the Sergeant-at-arms should bring these parties before the committee and that they be put upon their oath as to their designs. The proposed meeting was denounced as a conspiracy and state officials who had signed the call were promised impeachment and deposition. The committee met in hot haste, and, without a particle of evidence, a proposition was made and seriously considered for the expulsion of the twelve Republican members who had signed the circular. But it was thought best, though this expulsion was then apparently a foregone conclusion, to go through with some form of trial. It was determined at one time to put these eighteen persons UNDER THE RULE, and send for them one at a time and examine them secretly. But this Lilliputian Star-chamber backed down from this and concluded only to send the Sergeant-at-arms for them, one at a time. They selected for their first victim a member of the House that they thought they could most easily embarrass and intimidate. The Sergeant-at-arms took him before the committee. He begged them for counsel. He implored them for permission to send for witnesses to prove himself guiltless of offence. But, sirs, this august and majestic committee were deaf to all these supplications. They parried

his applications and excused themselves upon the false and hypocritical ground that he was not on trial, but that he had arraigned the Legislature and that they were trying that august body. It was in vain that this plain and modest farmer referred to the Bill of Rights and to the liberty of speech and of the press. They were inexorable and demanded of him what right he had to make the charges against the Legislature of Tennessee.

But I will say no more now of these proceedings as I expect to be taken before this committee myself. Yet, I will say a word as to the persons who signed the call for this "conspiracy." Of myself I wish to say but little. I am known as a liberal or conservative Republican. I was one of the first to advocate the removal of all disabilities from those who had taken part in the rebellion. But I did not think it necessarily followed that I had to join the rebel Democratic party.

I believed in the great progressive ideas of the national Republican party, and thought I had the right to act with it. I could not join the Democratic party because I did not imbibe its principles and because I could not act with any party that resorted to intimidation and secret murder by masked mobs as a part of its party machinery—that carried elections by such horrible appliances. I had no mask or shroud—no wed-

ding garments for the horrid nuptials

The next name that appears to the call is that of the Hon. J. O. Shackelford who has for years occupied a seat on the Supreme Court Bench and who rendered that decision which restored thirty or forty thousand rebels to the elective franchise. I remember to have seen him a year ago, present in person, a numerous signed petition to the Legislature, asking for the repeal of the franchise law. Next comes the name of the Hon. John Trimble, of Nashville, one of your old and most honored citizens, and who has at all times, and under all circumstances, advocated universal suffrage and universal amnesty. Then there is ex-Senator Elliott, known as a liberal Republican, and who, in his place as Senator, one and two years ago, advocated the most liberal policy.

Col. G. W. Blackburn, State Comptroller, also a man of moderate and liberal ideas and of spotless reputation for integrity. Next appears the name of Col. Peabody, Collector of Internal Revenue, a gentleman of harmless life and liberal ideas. Then follows the names of the twelve Republican members of the Legislature—plain, honest men, from the mountains — conscientious Union men, whose greatest sin, in the estimation of a majority of the Democrats, was committed in defeating Andrew Johnson for United States Senator..

Such are the "conspirators" who

have dared to call this meeting, and who are to be called to account through an arresting officer, for calling in question the acts of the Legislature.

I propose to enumerate and to review a portion of the acts of this Legislature, and to show that they are oppressive to the white and colored Unionists of the State, and that they will have, and were intended to have this effect.

I pass over the organization of the Legislature and take no exception to their defeating a gallant Union officer for Clerk of the House, and their election of ex-Confederates to nearly all the offices in their gift. Offices amount to nothing unless the officer has power to oppress. I pass to the laws they have enacted, or propose to enact.

There is quite a prevalent idea that under that provision of the constitution, all laws are to be equal and uniform throughout the State, no law can be passed that will not oppress one class as much as another. I confess that at one time I greatly relied upon this idea. But I was mistaken. This Legislature have taught me that when there is a *will* there is a *way*. Those who will carefully examine the proceedings of the Legislature will be struck with the adroitness and ingenuity with which they have cheated the constitution in this respect.

They repealed the common school law. I know they pretend to plead

high taxes and an embarrassed treasury, in justification of this act; but I, who have been here, on the ground, happen to know their purposes and motives in doing so. The people had not complained of the school tax. On the contrary they have paid it with pleasure. I am aware that members point to certain defects in the machinery of the law as pretexts for its total repeal. But these defects might have been easily corrected by amendment. I happen to know their real motives for this repeal.

1. This common school law was the only hope of the colored children of the State. Legislators hated the freedmen, and therefore went for the repeal of the school tax. They argued that the negroes had but little property, and paid but little taxes, and yet would get an equal share of the benefits. An argument that is at war with free schools under any circumstances.

2. It was a property tax, and it so happened that East Tennessee had, proportionally, the least amount of property and the greatest number of children. Among the high mountains, pure atmosphere, and crystal waters of East Tennessee we are most successful in raising children. But the fathers of these children had committed the sin of loyalty. They had gone into the Federal army, and for that reason the school tax was cut off. With this Legislature loyalty is the orig-

inal sin, and they have visited the sins of the fathers upon the children. Yes, gentlemen, if it should ever be your fortune to ride through the hills and valleys of East Tennessee, and to see the little white headed boys and girls sporting among the flowers of her hillsides, or gambolling in the shadows of her great mountains, you may say to them, "*but for the loyalty of your fathers you would be at school learning to read the scriptures.*" The repeal of the school law was a rebel blow, most effectually dealt. It struck a loyal and hated race; and a loyal and hated section. But let us look to other laws.

When the Legislature met they found a law upon the statute book "to preserve the public peace." It was a law of a stringent character against masked murderers. It not only proposed to punish them, but it disabled them from sitting upon juries. To use a cant phrase, the Legislature "went for" this law. They repealed it in hot haste! And what was the consequence? In less than ten days gentlemen — chivalrous Southern gentlemen — were riding at night in masks and shrouds, armed as brigands, whipping, shooting and hanging the helpless colored man and the unprotected white loyalist, and dropping notices at the gates of citizens, from the Grand Cyclops, commanding them to leave the State. It was only last Saturday night that I passed from Chattanooga to this

city against the warning advice of friends, and heard the thrilling whistle of the Kuklux at three different points on the road, and saw them in ghastly costume around the train. On reaching what I supposed to be a place of safety, a train of thought came into my mind. My early ideas of Southern chivalry! The great Washington was a Southern chivalier! Marion and Horry and Jasper were representatives of the chivalry of 1776, and so were Jefferson and Madison and the Lees and Carrolls and Haynes. At a later day was Jackson and Coffee and Carroll, of Tennessee. These were the representatives of the chivalry of their day. They despised a mean action. Their instincts were all noble; and though they may have thought too much of what is called the code of honor, they felt bound to protect the weak and defenceless. Certainly they despised cowardice and cruelty. Yet, here we have the chivalry of 1870!! closely masked, armed as brigands, we see them at the midnight hour, hovering around a railroad train seeking the life of some passenger whose only offense is that he is a Republican, or we hear of them in some lonely cabin butchering the inmates in cold blood because their skin is black and they dare to live. The latest type of Southern chivalry! Great God! How hath the mighty fallen! What degeneration and demoralization!

Next comes another law which,

like all the others, has a modest and innocent caption. It is entitled "an act to amend the criminal laws of this State." It simply provides that no person shall vote out of the district or ward in which he resides, and annexes a severe penalty to its violation. The Constitution only requires that a voter shall be a citizen of the county in which he offers to vote; but this act requires that he shall be a citizen of the district. Such a law was never thought of before, and, of course, there must be some matters *in pais* to explain this enactment. I will tell you. The chivalry have always boasted that they could control the colored vote. They say to the colored voter before election day that they will stop his wages if he votes the Republican ticket. The landholder tells him he will turn him out of house and home if he does so. If this is not sufficient, a notice from the Grand Cyclops, is left at his door, at night, to the effect that he will be killed if he votes the Republican ticket. To escape those dangers, the colored man has been in a habit of going to the town or some other district, where he might cast his vote in peace—unmolested. Sometimes he found at the county towns a company of militia or regular soldiers, with orders to protect him. This law was passed to compel the colored voter to go to the polls under the eye of his employer or landlord—a temporary master. The law is un-

down a blade of grass or catching a minnow in the nearest creek.

Then there is a bill pending which prohibits a renter from selling less than a bale of cotton without the consent of the land owner on which the cotton was grown. The object of this bill is palpable. The land owner may, *and will*, refuse his permission to the poor negro to sell his little crop of cotton and will take it at his own price, or nothing. It amounts to a proposition to give the landlord power to *confiscate* the labor of the poor colored man. If this bill does not pass, it will be voted down for fear of offending the sentiment of the majority of the nation. I might stand here till the gray dawn of morning enumerating and explaining the oppressive acts of this Legislature, but time forbids and I must pass on.

I have not commented upon the proposition of the convention to annex to the right of suffrage the condition of the payment of a poll tax. I have but a moment to devote to it. Whatever may be the merits of this proposition, the party in power in this State are estopped from advocating this doctrine. For four years past they have contended that suffrage was a personal right—a natural, inalienable right—and that no power could deprive a citizen of it. They have clamored themselves hoarse in favor of this doctrine. Yet, sirs, when it suits their convenience they qualify the right of suffrage! What is the object of this restriction upon suffrage? They intend, sirs, by indirection and by the power of wealth and management to render the condition of the negro as miserable as possible—to work him through the summer and fall and then—as some planters do mules—to turn him out at winter to starve. Hundreds are now leaving the State on account of that kind of treatment. There can be no question that this suffrage qualification is a blow aimed at the negro.

When the distinguished gentleman who preceded me alluded to the school fund, I heard cheers among those on the back seats. I have thus discovered that there are some Pale Faces or Ku-klux present. Though I had not intended to do so, I propose right here to take up this subject of the school fund of Tennessee. I happen to understand this subject, and I will show you what has become of the school fund of Ten-

nessee.

For more than a year past the rebel press of Tennessee have abounded in cries of "school fund thieves," "Radical robbers of the school fund," "robbers of the poor children," etc., and it is stated that the school fund of Tennessee was by Radical manipulation converted into prey for the loyal brotherhood."

There is not, as I will proceed to show, one syllable of truth in, nor the slightest foundation for, any of these charges. On the contrary, every dollar of the school fund of Tennessee was appropriated by the rebel leaders of Tennessee between the 15th of March, 1862 and the 15th of May, 1865. It was carried away at the former date by order or permission of the Confederate Legislature of 1861-2. It consisted of a little over two and a half million dollars and not one cent of this vast sum was ever returned to Tennessee. Not one dollar of the school fund of Tennessee ever went into the hands or became subject to the control of any Republican Legislature or of any Republican official. No! when the dark storm cloud of civil war was lifted from the State, its sacred school fund was gone—gone like the dew of the morning before the rising sun. Every dollar of it had been paid out *in support of treason*, in aid of what is now so mournfully denominated "*the lost cause*." The only showing the custodians of "the school fund of Tennessee" had when they returned to the State was the exact amount of the sacred fund in the shape of Confederate bonds! This is precisely what became of "the school fund of Tennessee" and it now lies among the wreck of the Bank of Tennessee payable "six months after the ratification of a treaty of peace between the Confederate government and the United States!"

A very brief historical sketch of this "sacred fund," drawn from the laws of Congress and of the State, will establish all I have said.

The school fund of Tennessee is, or rather *was*, (for it has ceased to exist since the Bank of Tennessee was invested in Confederate bonds) almost entirely the bounty of the Federal Government. In the year 1796, when the United States ceded to the new State of Tennessee a vast amount of public lands within her borders, it set apart two hundred thousand acres of said land for the benefit of common schools, the proceeds of which, by the express provisions of an act of Congress was to remain a *perpetual fund* inviolably for the sup-